

Conference of World Buddhist Leaders and Scholars - Sri Lanka

Problem of the Buddhists - an aerial survey

Professor Jotiya Dhirasekera, Editor -in - Chief, Encyclopaedia of Buddhism

If one were not to lose sight of the circumstances under which the idea of this World Conference was first mooted 18 months ago, it has to be admitted that it was convened to examine the present condition of the Buddhists of the world today and plan a course of action.

The deliberations of this conference therefore are anticipated to pass through three stages. There has to be first a clear identification of the problems which the Buddhists all over the world are beset with. These problems can be multiple in nature and reflect a bewildering diversity in their range. In size and magnitude they can be microscopic but subtly devastating and destructive. They can also be massive and monumental, sweeping away everything in their wake. On the other hand, these problems can have a commonness of character and be universal both in their outward manifestation and the nature of the damage they cause. Yet there can be others with specifically provincial characteristics. The Buddhist community has to be diligently engaged both at national and international levels to explore and detect these and be sensitive enough to record their vibrations. In most parts of the Buddhist world today we are in our present lamentable plight through the lack of this diligent watchfulness. And also in being diverted into less rewarding, but perhaps more glamorous areas of activity in the name of religion. The statement of the Dhammapada that the heedless are as bad as they were dead - *ye pamatta yatha mata* - is no where more true than in this context.

At the second stage of our deliberations it is important for us to turn our attention to the analysis of the problems we have been able to detect. No matter

the intensity of the suffering to which we have fallen on account of these problems, no real solution or remedial measures for them can be formulated unless we discover through a correct process of analysis the real causes at work which lead to these situations. In a world which moves on at an aggressively competitive pace in all areas of life like the social, political and even the religious, the threat to Buddhism from the larger and rapidly expanding groups is not to be underrated. In the history of Buddhism, these threats have come in different guises. Once it was the destructive fury that was generated by the religious fanaticism of invading armies, both in India and outside India. Buddhist ruins of western Asia, Central Asia and even parts of India tell these tales today with tragic eloquence. Others who assumed for themselves a greater missionary role could not rest this side of large scale conversions into their own faith and persisted in their mission of imaginary civilising of all others through their own creed. Unfortunately, they expect all others to believe that they are genuinely convinced that the world has no other means of salvation.

Colonial expansionism with its multi-pronged attacks thus destroyed from time to time everything that had been developed socially, politically and culturally in this part of Asia and reduced them to the status of what is now arrogantly labelled by these very agents of destruction as 'developing countries'. The dark days of foreign domination veered most countries of Asia off their accepted value systems. Policies of calculated exploitation of the resources of the colonies left them poorer and disorganised. This is why we find ourselves in this category of developing countries, having to make a start all over again.

In most cases, the religious and cultural value systems of these regions were irreparably damaged. The damage was done, on the one hand, by setting in a process of cultural desertification, ripping them of the distinctiveness of their native genius, with its charm of simplicity and down to earth realism. On the other, alien and ill-fitting patterns of culture of the invaders which do not sit with ease on our eastern peopled up in these lands like choking weeds. These

affected the lives of people in areas of food, dress and household manners and personal relationships.

But it must be remembered that the responsibility for everything that the Buddhists have suffered cannot always be left at the door step of another. This is where a reliable process of self-analysis and self-scrutiny is urgently needed. The Buddhists themselves were seen to be losing their spiritual strength, both individually and institutionally. They were losing sight of the inner vitality of their own religion and through a consequent confusion of its real scope and content, a decay in the very nerve and fibre of the religion set in. Consciously or unconsciously, people began to feel the need to look out for props to support their religious edifices or in other words the need for very gross forms of religion like worship and prayer for the grant of day to day needs. This is how they succumbed to the enticements of the invader, political or cultural, or even religious, who found room to feel himself superior over his subject through his imagined or assumed power to grant wishes and requests. The Buddhists must view with a sense of tragedy that this is an on going process, continuously refuelled and that it is seen at work even today.

At this stage you would appreciate that I have been fairly specific in my indication of the possible sources of origin with regard to the major problems which the Buddhists have to face today. As you deliberate on them you can scan a wider horizon, perhaps wider than I have indicated, discovering many more figures, some precise and clear and others shadowy and less discernible. You can also plunge deeper into the problems, gauging the extent of their damage and alerting the Buddhists adequately about them. For example, the commercialism and the stark utilitarianism of the present day which is almost a universal malady have torn the Buddhists of most countries off their moorings and shattered their pattern of life which had been marked by its insistence on moral rectitude, by its structural simplicity, and its sense of charity and its honesty of purpose. It would not be surprising if at the end of every decade we

discovered two or three new problems confronting the Buddhists of any single country or the Buddhist community of the entire world. Nevertheless, there are a few basic corrections, or self- adjustments which the Buddhists need to do without further delay in order to regain both the courage and the strength to withstand these increasing and recurring problems.

In taking up these for discussion I now come to the third stage of our deliberations which I would refer to as prescriptive. Everything that we need to do both urgently and diligently, in my opinion, come under the two main categories of organisation and integration. The first of these, I would even refer to as re-organisation, for the Buddhist community today, in many parts of the world, is like a house put out of order. The Buddhists are not, individually or collectively, adequately organised for the contemporary social context. Some of you would perhaps think that I am using very stringent norms in making these observations. May be, you would at times be justified in thinking so. In this context, I wish to place before you for your consideration three major areas in which the Buddhists should reorganise themselves efficiently and expeditiously, both for their own survival and for the purpose of reaching higher rungs of development.

Those of you who gathered together in Bangkok in November 1980 at the 13th General Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists at which the idea of the present conference was first taken up, would recollect the context in which my Honourable Minister proposed the resolution calling for a conference. Having quoted the words of the Buddha from the Mahaparinibbana sutta he went on to say:

"Two things clearly emerge from these considerations of the Buddha. He rightly counted upon the learning of his disciples and their competence to debate and defend the thesis is of their master's teaching. This undoubtedly is the way to guarantee the continuance of the faith. It is also to be equally observed that this responsibility is to be shared by all groups in society: monk

and layman, male and female. There was not any need for monopolistic custodianship of the Dhamma, and the Buddha holding the scales evenly for both sexes did not discriminate against the women in this context. It is a reflection and an outcome of this attitude that we see in the presence of nuns and laywomen like Dhammadinna and Khujjutara renowned for their erudition and the ability to expound the Dhamma."

It is hoped that over this period of nearly eighteen months since the resolution was passed, these remarks which prompted this conference have seeped well into you. It is this awareness of real Buddhist history which has to give this conference in which we are participating now in Sri Lanka its particular direction. It is to be appreciated that this is not a General Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists. We thank the W.F.B. for this opportunity they have given us to get together a larger congregation. And once again, our sincere thanks to them for their initiative.

Any conference of this sort which at least attempts to take a look at Buddhist problems, to be meaningful in the process, must combine both Buddhist leadership and Buddhist scholarship. There would be nothing ultra-academic in this conference which would not be a part of Buddhist life. Faith and piety alone cannot be allowed to guide our destinies. We cannot turn our back, remember, on the Buddha's own assessment that the Buddhist way of life is essentially for the man of wisdom and not for the one who is bereft of it - *Pannavato 'yam dhammo nayam dhammo duppannassa* (A. IV. p.229). The Buddhists need in a large way leadership, both at national and international levels, to consolidate their position as a bloc to be reckoned with. Their point of view, though not thrust with military aggressiveness, should in the name of sanity and for the survival of mankind be treated with the respect it deserves. Proper organisation in the Buddhist sense would be both the planning of the life of the individual in accordance with the value scales of the Dhamma, as well as the provision of the correct milieu which is conducive to such living. This is what the Buddhists

approvingly speak of as *patirupadesavaso* or residence in a proper clime. This idea of propriety is partly the collective expression of individual goodness which Buddhism strives to establish through its basic concept of sila. A meaningful grasp and not a merely ritualistic acceptance of the *pancasila* which is the basic ethical code of the Buddhist layman is adequate to restore the balance which the society of today, both at the domestic and at the global level, has lost. Its two cardinal themes are (a) the respect for one's right to life and (b) the respect for one's right to property and ownership. Around these two concepts, the ethical precepts may of course be increased ad infinitum. The data for making such a blueprint is already laid down in the Dhamma and it is for the retrieval of these long lost values that we insist on an intellectual approach in this conference.

While we have made it possible to probe into international and inter-religious problems connected with the Buddhists during the deliberations of this conference, I wish at this stage to mark out a more specific area of Buddhist life which has a relevance to any Buddhist community in its own local context, and can subsequently be integrated as a global issue. It would now be clear to you from the wisdom and experience of the Buddha himself that the healthy and successful continuance of Buddhism as a religion, effectively fulfilling its role, depends on efficient organization and wise leadership of both monks and laymen. In the twentieth century context there are three major areas which the Buddhists in particular have to be concerned with and which need prompt attention. They are:

- a. Organization in their own way of work and workmen which is the basis of a sound economy and out of which flows the peace and prosperity of the land.
- b. Maximum utilization of the resourcefulness of woman in our communities. It is hoped that deliberations under these two themes a & b which constitute utilisation of manpower resources in the land will adequately probe into the problems of the youth as well.

- c. Re-organization and complete mobilization of monk power in the land, both for institutional soundness and public utility.

At a seminar held in December 1980 on Religious and Cultural Traditions in the Development of Human Rights in Sri Lanka, I had the occasion to deal at some length on the first question of Buddhist attitude with regard to organization of work and workmen. At this seminar, I have the assistance of a colleague of mine who is no mean scholar of Buddhism who will address himself to this question further. I can safely leave it in his hands.

My major essay today would therefore be on the maximum utilization of the resourcefulness of woman. The re- organization of monk power, it is to be noted, will be a subject of special study at Commission level. While this Conference would have a few speakers dealing with this subject of the resourcefulness of woman, I wish to take this opportunity to make an overall survey of the subject, both with the doctrinal backing of the religion on the one hand and with what I consider a twentieth century relevance, on the other.

More than 25 centuries before the women's liberation movement in the west made its first faint rumblings, Gotama the Buddha, in establishing his order of nuns or the Bhikkhuni sasana, made the most successful harnessing of woman power. This came most naturally in the wake of the just and unbiased observations he made about woman, free from prejudice, in the general corpus of his teachings. To be very precise, he knew the woman's strength and he knew her weaknesses too. With this awareness, it is an incredible and intrepid challenge that the Buddha made when he declared that woman shall not be discriminated against in society on baseless assumptions of feminine weakness and inferiority. This loss of status of the woman in pre- Buddhist India was the result of religious exploitation and theological sanctions. These have been very correctly pointed out by Prof. Altekar. (See Altekar, A.S. The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, p.204f). The Buddha liberated her in the social, religious

and intellectual spheres of life and placed her within the security of respected conventions, at least in the communities where his teachings prevailed. Losing sight of these vital considerations with regard to some at least of her limitations, Parsvanatha who was the first founder of Jainism did generously throw open to women the doors of Jaina monasticism without adequate safeguards and thereby bring about a degeneracy of the entire order. With this awareness and all this experience of the past, the Buddha was not to repeat the mistake of predecessors, the enthusiastic Jains.

The Buddha's view was that irrespective of sex a woman could rival a man in wisdom and virtue. As a citizen of the world her worth as a gentle and wise daughter, and a loving and dutiful wife who is equally skilled in efficient household management, a loveable in-law in her husband's home and above all a wise and diligent mother who ultimately turns out to be the matrix of all components of society, including its righteous ruler, is incalculable. The power she could wield is immense. That in brief is the Buddhist position about woman in religion and society. But now let us ask ourselves the question whether this has ever been adequately tapped, and put to good use for a healthy and robust social build up. India constantly offered towering opposition to the Buddha in this liberal attitude to woman. Brahmin literature of almost all ages abounds in many theories depreciating the status of woman in society. Perhaps the very conservatism of India against which the Buddha was battling, and perhaps more latterly the partial primitiveness of the social concepts of the western world, as reflected in the long delayed admission of women into Universities like Oxford and Cambridge, prevented the woman from contributing her real share to social and intellectual upliftment and to development of humanity as a whole in the contemporary world. In our opinion it is this suppression or repression, by whatever name one calls it, that brought about the explosive outbursts of the women's liberation movement in the recent years.

In view of the very central position which the woman occupies in the family

and the home, as (a) the progenitor of every single member of society, (b) the planner and constant counsellor with regard to all activity in the home, (c) and in her being the solace and the source of comfort in all circumstances within the family, she has come to be called in the Buddhist context the friend in the home: *mata mittam sake ghare*. Her emotional stature and her specialised wisdom, her unique skills and her feats of endurance as understood in Buddhist texts, are all geared to serve this end. It would be logical to assume that by virtue of this role she plays in the home, she should occupy an equally central position in society, though not necessarily physically as a manpower unit. That the Buddhists upheld such a view is clear to any one who carefully analyses the wealth of information in the Buddhist texts which specially deal with the role of woman in home and society. A special Samyutta in the Samyutta Nikaya, namely the Matugama Samyutta is devoted to this. This new role assigned to the woman in Buddhism, retrieving the position she had lost in India under the dominance of Brahmanic religious thinking, made Buddhism unique when compared with the other contemporary religions and philosophies of India.

The woman in the home is called upon to stabilise and safeguard domestic finances (*sambhatam anurakkhati*) by rationalising expenditure in the home through careful planning of work (*susamvihitakammanta*) and through wise administration of the servants in the household (*sangahita parijjana*). In addition to all this, it comes with ease to the accomplished woman to be dearly loveable to the husband (*bhattu manapam carati*). Together with her husband, she constitutes the first teachers (*pubbacariya*) to their children. With these ends in view for which a woman is eminently or pre-eminently qualified, society must learn to nurture with love and care a girl from childhood to womanhood. Mark my words when I say 'society must learn to nurture a girl'. In a Buddhist society, such grooming of the woman for good citizenship is, to begin with, the responsibility of the parents, and latterly and in gradual stages of the husband, in-laws and the children by their respectful and affectionate attitudes towards her. This is what you and I are expected to do. That is how we can realistically contribute to world

peace. Once this position of the woman is secured in the family and society, crimes in society, from juvenile delinquency to alcoholism, from drug addiction to unmarried mothers and unwanted children, and the present day social safety-valves of legalised or illegal abortion, could possibly be reduced to a minimum. It is with these considerations in mind that I took up the question of ' maximum utilization of the resourcefulness of woman'.

Most of you present here, I have no doubt, have given thought to this problem from time to time. From the angle of this conference, it is relevant to take note of the following. Going through the WFB Resolutions from the first to the twelfth general conferences, I was impressed by the fact that the WFB, almost as an infant of two years had shown an interest in the formation of a Universal Buddhist Women's Federation (See Res. 24/20/GG.2/2495 of 1952). In this resolution it is stated that a Universal Buddhist Women's Federation shall be formed with the first President thereof elected from among the Japanese Buddhist ladies. Taking serious note of the preface to this compendium of resolutions, I proceeded further and was struck with awe on finding another resolution which proposed the same 20 years later, apparently with the only significant change of substituting World for Universal and Conference for Federation. In spite of these two which appeared to be massive resolutions within an interval of twenty years, the International Women's year (1975) bypassed those who proposed these resolutions without any official statement from them.

In the context of my proposal, which by no means is a resolution, the only reason for citing from the WFB resolutions is to show that I basically begin from the domestic position. Charity begins at home, they say. At a national, provincial, state level, let every community of Buddhists make sure that they are adequately organized to maximize the impact of woman on society. If one chooses only to stand and stare while the Buddhist woman today is floating down the river of religious sentimentalism, allowed to busy herself only with mere trivialities, I assure you that there is every chance of her getting drowned, well before she

reaches the ocean, no matter wherever that be.

There is provision to take up this question at Commission and Committee sittings. All that I wish to indicate at this stage is that we should concentrate on achieving these goals through Buddhist Women's Bureaus at local levels. Then a real vibrant International Federation of Buddhist Women's Bureaus will not be too far away in the distance.

Before I now bring my remarks to a close, let me add one word about the concept of integration to which I referred at the very beginning. It can efficiently be done only after considerable success has been achieved in the sphere of organization at domestic and provincial levels. Otherwise, hastily contracted federations can have paralysing effects on the so formed bodies. This would be so for two reasons. Individual members would have very little to contribute to the healthy growth of the major parent body and on account of their own lack of self-sustaining power and efficiency they can turn out to be a mill-stone round the neck of the major organization.

I believe I have drawn your attention both to the wider spectrum of the problems of the Buddhists which stretch extensively through history, as well as to a few specific situations of contemporary society to which we are hardly awakened to take adequate notice thereof. Therefore it is opportune for me to end up with the words *arabhatha nikkhamatha yunjatha buddhasasane*. Arise and get into action and live the real life of the Buddhist. I shall join you in the commissions to discuss the rest of this injunction.

[This keynote address was delivered before the Conference of World Buddhist leaders and Scholars held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in 1981 by Professor Jotiya Dhirasekera, Editor in Chief of the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism.

He is presently Bhikkhu Dhammavahari of Dharmayatanaya, Maharagama, Sri Lanka]

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The deliberations of this conference therefore are anticipated to pass through three stages. There has to be first a clear identification of the problems which the Buddhists all over the world are beset with. These problems can be multiple in nature and reflect a bewildering diversity in their range. In size and magnitude they can be microscopic but subtly devastating and destructive. They can also be massive and monumental, sweeping away everything in their wake. On the other hand, these problems can have a commonness of character and be universal both in their outward manifestation and the nature of the damage they cause. Yet there can be others with specifically provincial characteristics. The Buddhist community has to be diligently engaged both at national and international levels to explore and detect these and be sensitive enough to record their vibrations. In most parts of the Buddhist world today we are in our present lamentable plight through the lack of this diligent watchfulness. And also in being diverted into less rewarding, but perhaps more glamorous areas of activity in the name of religion. The statement of the Dhammapada that the heedless are as bad as they were dead - *ye pamatta yatha mata* - is no where more true than in this context.

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In most cases, the religious and cultural value systems of these regions were irreparably damaged. The damage was done, on the one hand, by setting in a process of cultural desertification, ripping them of the distinctiveness of their native genius, with its charm of simplicity and down to earth realism. On the other, alien and ill-fitting patterns of culture of the invaders which do not sit with ease on our eastern peopled up in these lands like choking weeds. These

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But it must be remembered that the responsibility for everything that the Buddhists have suffered cannot always be left at the door step of another. This is where a reliable process of self-analysis and self-scrutiny is urgently needed. The Buddhists themselves were seen to be losing their spiritual strength, both individually and institutionally. They were losing sight of the inner vitality of their own religion and through a consequent confusion of its real scope and content, a decay in the very nerve and fibre of the religion set in. Consciously or unconsciously, people began to feel the need to look out for props to support their religious edifices or in other words the need for very gross forms of religion like worship and prayer for the grant of day to day needs. This is how they succumbed to the enticements of the invader, political or cultural, or even religious, who found room to feel himself superior over his subject through his imagined or assumed power to grant wishes and requests. The Buddhists must view with a sense of tragedy that this is an on going process, continuously refuelled and that it is seen at work even today.

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approvingly speak of as *patirupadesavaso* or residence in a proper clime. This idea of propriety is partly the collective expression of individual goodness which Buddhism strives to establish through its basic concept of sila. A meaningful grasp and not a merely ritualistic acceptance of the *pancasila* which is the basic ethical code of the Buddhist layman is adequate to restore the balance which the society of today, both at the domestic and at the global level, has lost. Its two cardinal themes are (a) the respect for one's right to life and (b) the respect for one's right to property and ownership. Around these two concepts, the ethical precepts may of course be increased ad infinitum. The data for making such a blueprint is already laid down in the Dhamma and it is for the retrieval of these long lost values that we insist on an intellectual approach in this conference.

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- a. Organization in their own way of work and workmen which is the basis of a sound economy and out of which flows the peace and prosperity of the land.
- b. Maximum utilization of the resourcefulness of woman in our communities. It is hoped that deliberations under these two themes a & b which constitute utilisation of manpower resources in the land will adequately probe into the problems of the youth as well.

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More than 25 centuries before the women's liberation movement in the west made its first faint rumblings, Gotama the Buddha, in establishing his order of nuns or the Bhikkhuni sasana, made the most successful harnessing of woman power. This came most naturally in the wake of the just and unbiased observations he made about woman, free from prejudice, in the general corpus of his teachings. To be very precise, he knew the woman's strength and he knew her weaknesses too. With this awareness, it is an incredible and intrepid challenge that the Buddha made when he declared that woman shall not be discriminated against in society on baseless assumptions of feminine weakness and inferiority. This loss of status of the woman in pre- Buddhist India was the result of religious exploitation and theological sanctions. These have been very correctly pointed out by Prof. Altekar. (See Altekar, A.S. The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, p.204f). The Buddha liberated her in the social, religious

and intellectual spheres of life and placed her within the security of respected conventions, at least in the communities where his teachings prevailed. Losing sight of these vital considerations with regard to some at least of her limitations, Parsvanatha who was the first founder of Jainism did generously throw open to women the doors of Jaina monasticism without adequate safeguards and thereby bring about a degeneracy of the entire order. With this awareness and all this experience of the past, the Buddha was not to repeat the mistake of predecessors, the enthusiastic Jains.

The Buddha's view was that irrespective of sex a woman could rival a man in wisdom and virtue. As a citizen of the world her worth as a gentle and wise daughter, and a loving and dutiful wife who is equally skilled in efficient household management, a loveable in-law in her husband's home and above all a wise and diligent mother who ultimately turns out to be the matrix of all components of society, including its righteous ruler, is incalculable. The power she could wield is immense. That in brief is the Buddhist position about woman in religion and society. But now let us ask ourselves the question whether this has ever been adequately tapped, and put to good use for a healthy and robust social build up. India constantly offered towering opposition to the Buddha in this liberal attitude to woman. Brahmin literature of almost all ages abounds in many theories depreciating the status of woman in society. Perhaps the very conservatism of India against which the Buddha was battling, and perhaps more latterly the partial primitiveness of the social concepts of the western world, as reflected in the long delayed admission of women into Universities like Oxford and Cambridge, prevented the woman from contributing her real share to social and intellectual upliftment and to development of humanity as a whole in the contemporary world. In our opinion it is this suppression or repression, by whatever name one calls it, that brought about the explosive outbursts of the women's liberation movement in the recent years.

In view of the very central position which the woman occupies in the family

and the home, as (a) the progenitor of every single member of society, (b) the planner and constant counsellor with regard to all activity in the home, (c) and in her being the solace and the source of comfort in all circumstances within the family, she has come to be called in the Buddhist context the friend in the home: *mata mittam sake ghare*. Her emotional stature and her specialised wisdom, her unique skills and her feats of endurance as understood in Buddhist texts, are all geared to serve this end. It would be logical to assume that by virtue of this role she plays in the home, she should occupy an equally central position in society, though not necessarily physically as a manpower unit. That the Buddhists upheld such a view is clear to any one who carefully analyses the wealth of information in the Buddhist texts which specially deal with the role of woman in home and society. A special Samyutta in the Samyutta Nikaya, namely the Matugama Samyutta is devoted to this. This new role assigned to the woman in Buddhism, retrieving the position she had lost in India under the dominance of Brahmanic religious thinking, made Buddhism unique when compared with the other contemporary religions and philosophies of India.

The woman in the home is called upon to stabilise and safeguard domestic finances (*sambhatam anurakkhati*) by rationalising expenditure in the home through careful planning of work (*susamvihitakammanta*) and through wise administration of the servants in the household (*sangahita parijjana*). In addition to all this, it comes with ease to the accomplished woman to be dearly loveable to the husband (*bhattu manapam carati*). Together with her husband, she constitutes the first teachers (*pubbacariya*) to their children. With these ends in view for which a woman is eminently or pre-eminently qualified, society must learn to nurture with love and care a girl from childhood to womanhood. Mark my words when I say 'society must learn to nurture a girl'. In a Buddhist society, such grooming of the woman for good citizenship is, to begin with, the responsibility of the parents, and latterly and in gradual stages of the husband, in-laws and the children by their respectful and affectionate attitudes towards her. This is what you and I are expected to do. That is how we can realistically contribute to world

peace. Once this position of the woman is secured in the family and society, crimes in society, from juvenile delinquency to alcoholism, from drug addiction to unmarried mothers and unwanted children, and the present day social safety-valves of legalised or illegal abortion, could possibly be reduced to a minimum. It is with these considerations in mind that I took up the question of ' maximum utilization of the resourcefulness of woman'.

Most of you present here, I have no doubt, have given thought to this problem from time to time. From the angle of this conference, it is relevant to take note of the following. Going through the WFB Resolutions from the first to the twelfth general conferences, I was impressed by the fact that the WFB, almost as an infant of two years had shown an interest in the formation of a Universal Buddhist Women's Federation (See Res. 24/20/GG.2/2495 of 1952). In this resolution it is stated that a Universal Buddhist Women's Federation shall be formed with the first President thereof elected from among the Japanese Buddhist ladies. Taking serious note of the preface to this compendium of resolutions, I proceeded further and was struck with awe on finding another resolution which proposed the same 20 years later, apparently with the only significant change of substituting World for Universal and Conference for Federation. In spite of these two which appeared to be massive resolutions within an interval of twenty years, the International Women's year (1975) bypassed those who proposed these resolutions without any official statement from them.

In the context of my proposal, which by no means is a resolution, the only reason for citing from the WFB resolutions is to show that I basically begin from the domestic position. Charity begins at home, they say. At a national, provincial, state level, let every community of Buddhists make sure that they are adequately organized to maximize the impact of woman on society. If one chooses only to stand and stare while the Buddhist woman today is floating down the river of religious sentimentalism, allowed to busy herself only with mere trivialities, I assure you that there is every chance of her getting drowned, well before she

reaches the ocean, no matter wherever that be.

There is provision to take up this question at Commission and Committee sittings. All that I wish to indicate at this stage is that we should concentrate on achieving these goals through Buddhist Women's Bureaus at local levels. Then a real vibrant International Federation of Buddhist Women's Bureaus will not be too far away in the distance.

Before I now bring my remarks to a close, let me add one word about the concept of integration to which I referred at the very beginning. It can efficiently be done only after considerable success has been achieved in the sphere of organization at domestic and provincial levels. Otherwise, hastily contracted federations can have paralysing effects on the so formed bodies. This would be so for two reasons. Individual members would have very little to contribute to the healthy growth of the major parent body and on account of their own lack of self-sustaining power and efficiency they can turn out to be a mill-stone round the neck of the major organization.

I believe I have drawn your attention both to the wider spectrum of the problems of the Buddhists which stretch extensively through history, as well as to a few specific situations of contemporary society to which we are hardly awakened to take adequate notice thereof. Therefore it is opportune for me to end up with the words *arabhatha nikkhamatha yunjatha buddhasasane*. Arise and get into action and live the real life of the Buddhist. I shall join you in the commissions to discuss the rest of this injunction.

[This keynote address was delivered before the Conference of World Buddhist leaders and Scholars held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in 1981 by Professor Jotiya Dhirasekera, Editor in Chief of the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism.

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